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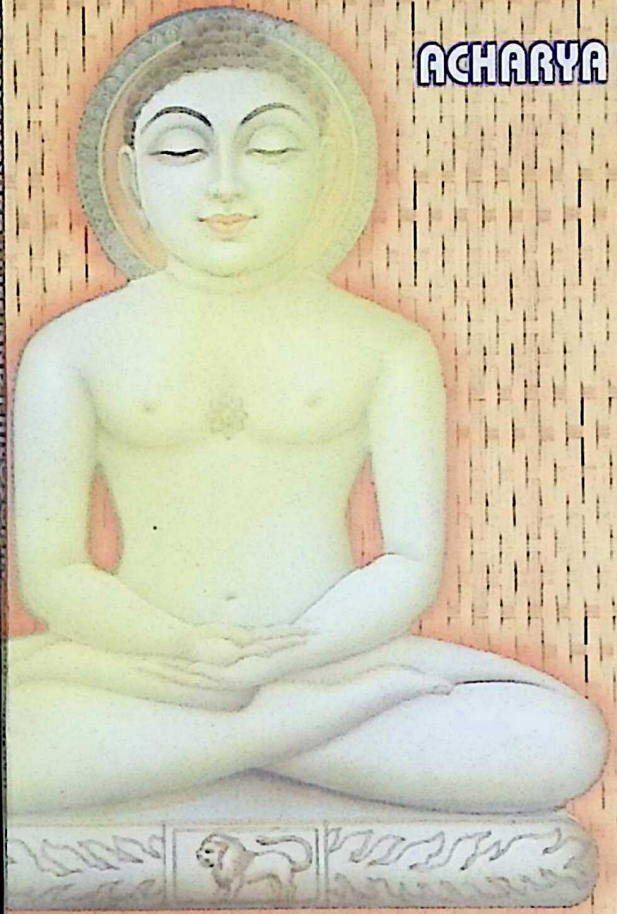
BHAGAVAN MAHĀVĪRA
LIFE AND PHILOSOPHY

ACHARYA TULSI



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JAIN VISHVA BHARATI
LADNUN 341306 (INDIA)

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BHAGAVĀN MAHĀVĪRA : LIFE AND PHILOSOPHY
by *Acharya Tulsi*

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Preface

The early household life of Bhagavān-Mahāvīra made the later initiated life so august that the moment of the birth of the enlightened one became most invaluable. At present we are recollecting the great moment, by celebrating his birth day. The moment of recollection is very small but his contribution is great. Whatever Bhagwan Mahavira contributed to us is very beneficial to all the living creatures and human beings. His message is related to past, present and future, so it is the most relevant and greatly useful even in the present content.

On the auspecious 2600th birth anniversary of Bhagavān Mahāvīra, efforts are being made to carry the message to the rank and file.

1. Bhagavān Mahāvīra : Life and Philosophy
2. A Message to awakening
3. Thus spoke Mahāvīra
4. Secrets of spirituality
5. Anekanta

Through these series of books, we can establish the direct contact to Bhagavān Mahāvīra's soul.

—Acharya Mahapragya

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Contents

I. BEFORE THE ADVENT OF BHAGAVĀN MAHĀVĪRA 9-11

The Traditions of Śramaṇas 9 ; Bhagavān Pārśva 10

II. AWATING THE DAWN 12-31

The Sunrise 13 ; The Dreams of the Mother 16 ; The Resolution in the Womb 18 ; Vardhamāna 23 ; Fearlessness and Exertion of Spiritual Vigour 24 ; Detachment and Marriage 26 ; Mahābhiniṣkramaṇa (The Great Renunciation) 27

III. THE PERIOD OF SĀDHANĀ (SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE) 32-44

The Sacred Grove 32 ; All Living Beings are Equal 37 ; Emancipation of a Slave-Girl 40

IV. KAIVALYA (OMNISCIENCE) AND THE BHAGAVĀN'S SERMONS 45-56

The First Sermon : The fourfold path 46 ; Muni-Dharma (Asceticism) 46 ; The Householder's Way for the Practice of Religion 51 ; Stress on Inwardness 52 ; Equality of Human Beings 53 ; The Soul itself is the Perfect Soul 53 ; Puruṣārtha

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(Spiritual Exertion) 53 ; Second Sermon : Eleven Theses 54

V. FOUNDATION OF RELIGIOUS ORDER 57-61
Initiation of Women 57 ; The Gospel of Anekānta 58 ; The Organization of the Monastic Order 60

VI. TRANSVALUATION 62-68
Egalitarianism 63

VII. THE RELEVANCE OF THE JAINA RELIGION TO MODERN PROBLEMS 69-81
Non-violence and Non-possessiveness 69 ; Non-violence and Liberty 70 ; Non-violence and Equality 70 ; Non-violence and Co-existence 71 ; Non-violence and Synthesis 72 ; Doctrine of Naya 73 ; Animate and Inanimate 75 ; Āśrava (Cause of the Influx of *karma*) and Bandha (Bondage of *karma*) 75 ; The Cycle of Suffering 76 ; The Means of Liberation from the Cycle of Sufferings 76 ; The Purpose of metaphysics 77 ; The Doctrine of Karma 77 ; The Relative Potentiality of Spiritual Exertion and *Karma* 79

VIII. NIRVĀṆA (LIBERATION) 82-86
Epilogue 85

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I

BEFORE THE ADVENT OF BHAGAVĀN MAHĀVĪRA

The Tradition of Śramaṇas

All substances undergo transformation. The transformations are temporal but the substances are eternal. Looked at from the point of view of substance, the temporal flame of the candle is eternal. Looked at from the point of view of transformation, the eternal space is temporal. The world can be explained in terms of both change and permanence. Names and forms continuously change. People often ask : Is the Jaina religion eternal ? If they were to ask whether *dharma* (religion) is eternal, the reply would be : yes, it is. *Dharma* is the nature of things. It had no beginning and it will have no end. But the terms *dharma* and *Jaina* are not eternal. They came into vogue some time and might disappear in the course of time. No name can claim eternity. The word *Jaina* is not very old, but the tradition it stands for is indeed ancient. The Jaina *dharma* is the successor of the older śramana *dharma*. The *Śramana* tradition in Indian

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religion and philosophy has a hoary past. It was developed and enriched by the *arhats*. Ṛṣabha was the first *arhat*. As a king, he was the pioneer in the fields of agriculture, trade and commerce, and crafts. He developed these for the good of his people. He was the first to set up a social organization and an administrative machinery for it. He became an ascetic in pursuit of spiritual attainments and was canonized as an *Arhat*. Then he began to preach his religion. This event belongs to that period of pre-history when human civilization was in its infancy. Primitive people were being settled in villages in organized communities. *Arhat* Ṛṣabha lit into every heart the fire which burnt in himself. The tradition of the *arhats* was born and it flowed unfettered till the time of Pārśva who was a historical figure. The earlier *arhats* are considered to be prehistoric.

Bhagavān Pārśva

Bhagavān Pārśva vitalized collective spiritual discipline. He opposed the practice of self-mortification based on ignorance and involving *himsā* (violence). He gave it a spiritual orientation. Because of his determined opposition to sheer self-mortification, he had to face serious difficulties. But one who treads the path of friendliness and non-violence must oppose *himsā* and face the consequences, howsoever painful they may be.

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Bhagavān Pārśva succeeded in his mission. The *śramaṇas* started wielding considerable influence in his time. It was, in fact, the influence of *ahiṁsā*. Bhagavān Pārśva, therefore, became very popular and the followers of both—the *Śramaṇa* and *Brāhmaṇa* traditions—came to acknowledge his greatness. Bhagavān Mahāvīra used the epithet *Puruṣādānīya* for Pārśva which means 'worshipped by the people' or 'leader of the people'. The parents of Bhagavān Mahāvīra and his maternal uncle Ceṭaka, the head of the Licchavi Republic of Vaiśālī, were the followers of Bhagavān Pārśva who had strengthened and popularised the philosophy of spiritualism and self-realization as against materialism and nature-worship. This was a great achievement.

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II

AWATING THE DAWN

Ṛṣabha was the pioneer of this culture Bhagavān Pārśva was the twentythird tirthaṇkara in the tradition. He was the prince of vārāṇasī and was born in 877 B.C. and initiated in 847 B.C.

Bhagavān Pārśva gave a momentum to the movement of *ahiṁsā* as a result of which the people of Sindhu, Sauvīra, Aṅga, Kuru, Pāñcāla, Kāśī and Kauśala came under its influence.

The soothing message of *ahiṁsā* came as a great relief to the victims of widespread violence in the same way in which the first showers of the summer rain are welcome to those sweating in the heat of the summer sun. The movement which had once grown weak was now made powerful again by Bhagavān Pārśva. His campaign to establish *ahiṁsā* as a social ideal made him very popular. This made him rise above the limitations of the old Śramaṇa tradition. He became a cosmopolitan figure. He attained *nirvāṇa* in 777 B.C.

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The Sunrise

The spring came and began to make its presence felt everywhere. Clad in the happy and colourful garments of new-born leaves the forest trees began to stir with life. The fragrance-laden flowers filled the atmosphere with their sweet smell and the spiring breeze carried it to distant corners. The sun rose on the morning of the thirteenth day of bright half of the lunar month of Caitia in this atmosphere. His mother's name was Triśalā and father's name Siddhārtha.

The birth of a child is not an accident. It is a definite link in the endless chain of destiny. It is true that new-born child comes all alone and barehanded in the world, but it is also equally true that its subtle body and mind contains infinite potentialities. It was this child who came to be known by the epithet *Mahāvīra* (i.e. a great hero) thirty years later. Nobody can aspire to become a Mahāvīra overnight. It takes ages to build a personality of courage and valour, and it had happened so in the case of Bhagavān Mahāvīra.

There is an old story. King Prajāpati of Potanpur had two sons, Acala and Tripṛṣṭha. One day a dance performance had been arranged in the court. The king, the princes and the courtiers watched the absorbing art of the dancers with great

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interest. Suddenly a visitor entered the court and disturbing the performance went straight to the king. The king suspended the performance, stood up to receive the visitor and began to listen to him.

Prince Tripṛṣṭha felt offended. He enquired of his adviser inquisitively who the visitor was and how he was being given so much attention by his father. He was told that the visitor was the envoy of King Aśvagrīva, the Prativāsudeva (monarch of half of the world), who was the overlord of King Prajāpati. The prince was put to silence. When the envoy was about to return, the prince accosted him and said, "Mind you, don't disturb such functions in the future. This time I pardon you". The envoy pocketed the insult for the time being. But when he presented himself to his Sovereign to report on his mission, he complained against how he had been insulted by the prince. Aśvagrīva was enraged and despatched another envoy to Potanpur to order Prajāpati to guard the rice-fields. This put Prajāpati in a dilemma. He told the prince that the envoy had avenged himself for the insult meted out to him by the prince and as a result of which he had been ordered to guard the rice fields out of turn. The prince asked his father not to worry and promised to meet the situation himself. He requested his father to depute him to the rice-field.

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Both the princes arrived at the rice-fields with a few soldiers. The officer-in-charge of the fields told them that a lion was at large stalking the valley and entreated them to protect the farmers. Thinking it to be a long drawn out affair, Prince Tripṛṣṭha decided to locate the lion immediately. Helped by the local people he arrived at the lion's den. A beat by the soldiers forced the lion out. Prince Tripṛṣṭha was a dare-devil and preferred to meet the lion bare-handed. He jumped down from his chariot and threw away his weapons. The frantic lion rushed at Tripṛṣṭha. The prince caught the jaws of the lion with both his hands and tore the beast into two like a worn out piece of cloth to the amazement of the onlookers. Then he called the officer of the forest and asked him to inform Aśvagrīva that the lion had been slain and that he was now returning home.

This very Tripṛṣṭha, after having gone through several cycles of births and rebirths, was born as the son of Siddhārtha. His valour now found new fields of operation. It was now oriented towards spiritual achievements. Now it was not a valour inspired by violent dispositions. It had assumed spiritual dimensions. And yet it was not an accidental change. The new orientation was the logical outcome of the *sādhanā* performed by the soul of Tripṛṣṭha in the course of numerous previous births. Let us not forget that every event has a chain of causes behind it.

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The Dreams of the Mother

Queen Triśalā had already given birth to her first son called Nandivardhana. The soul of Tripṛṣṭha was born to .her as the second son. She felt an unprecedented joy on the night of her conceiving the child. She saw a series of significant dreams in a half-waking state. She woke Siddhārtha up and told him that she felt something extraordinary. "I saw an elephant and a bull and several other things in my dream. I feel a very pleasant sensation. The whole atmosphere seems to be throbbing with light and joy", she reported to her husband and added, "I expect some extra-ordinary event to happen".

Siddhārtha sensed the situation and remarked, "Darling, you have seen very auspicious dreams. You are a fortunate lady and will bring fortune to our family." Thus encouraged, the queen's joy knew no bounds. In a state of exhilaration she retired to her bed-chamber. She remembered the saying that one who has seen an auspicious dream should not again go to sleep after one has been awakened from the dream. She remained awake for the rest of the night.

The rays of the sun had pierced the far ends of the earth. Everyone had applied himself to the day's business. The king sat in the audience hall with the queen. He called upon the chief courtier to summon the sooth-sayers to his audience.

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The sooth-sayers presented themselves before the king. They were honourably received. The king began to consult them on the queen's dreams. They examined the contents of the dreams and said, "The queen has seen very significant dreams. She will give birth to a son who will be a *Cakravartī* (universal emperor)."

The queen's face flushed with the forecast about her son becoming a *Cakravartī*. The king's face beamed with joy. Expectations are more thrilling than actual happenings.

The leader of the sooth-sayers gave his further reading : "Our prophesy needs an amendment after a careful study of the queen's dream." The king impatiently interfered and asked, "Is not my son going to be a *Cakravartī*?" The sooth-sayer replied, "He will certainly be a Cakravartī, but he will preserve the ideals and values of the *gaṇatantra* of Vaiśālī. He will be a *Dharma-cakravartī*, the Emperor of the Kingdom of Religion, and will develop the ideals of *ahiṁsā*, freedom, relativism, co-existence and non-possessiveness. He will be a great exponent of these."

Siddhārtha's perplexity was over. He sighed a sigh of relief and thanked the sooth-sayers. The queen was no less happy than the king. Their worldly joy changed into a pious mood. Joy born of a sense

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of worldly gains is not pure joy. It is alloyed with passion. Spiritual joy is perfectly pure. It can never be followed by sorrow.

The king amply rewarded the sooth-sayers and applied himself to his routine duties.

The Resolution in the Womb

There are things in the world which we cannot easily believe in. We are accustomed to believe in those things only which we have seen with our own eyes. It is common knowledge that the mind of a child grows with the growth of his sense-organs and the brain. Knowledge is not innate in the mind of a child. The reader will be surprised if he were told that the son of Triśalā commanded extra-sensory perception while he was still in the womb of his mother. Experience tells us that a child in the womb is not even capable of having sensory knowledge, not to a speak of supersensory knowledge. Miraculous events create all kinds of doubts.

The child which Triśalā had conceived had been born in his previous lives as an ascetic called Nandan. He had performed long *tapas* (penances). He would remain absorbed in meditation for a whole month without eating anything. At the end of the month he would take meals for a single day only and then again begin another month-long meditation. These *tapas* and meditations lasted for years and

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years together in a series. Service and meditation were blended together in the saint's life. Subtle powers had come to acquire perfect control over gross ones. By removing the effects of *karma* enveloping his consciousness he had permanently developed the capacity for *pratyakṣa* or direct perception, *avadhi jñāna* which may be called as *clairvoyance.*

While it was still in the womb, the child, out of compassion for its mother, decided not to move and stir in the womb. Why should it cause pain to its mother or to anybody else, it thought. Its soul had been soaked in *ahiṁsā* from time immemorial. It had been immersed in compassion. Moved by these it stopped stirring in the mother's womb like a *yogi* lost in meditation.

When Triśalā did not feel the foetus stirring in the womb, she became sad. Doubts possessed her. After some time she disclosed her condition to her attendants. The king also came to know what was happening to the queen. He too became gloomy. The entire household shared the anxiety and sadness of the royal couple.

The unborn child perceived what was happening in the external world. He saw sadness and anxiety pervading the whole atmosphere of the palace. He soon came to know the cause of the

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sudden change and reflected, "This world is really mysterious. That which is done for the good of mankind is regarded as a source of evil. I had stopped stirring out of compassion for my mother. This has caused distress to everyone. The world is accustomed to gross things only beyond which it is incapable of imagining anything." It decided to stir again. When Triśalā felt the stir in the womb, her face beamed with joy and the gloom changed into exaltation. The news reached the king also. Once again the palace became gay and assumed a festive appearance.

The child in the womb reflected upon the mental state and ambitions of its parents. Out of affection for them, it resolved not to become an ascetic after he had been born during the lifetime of his parents.

Triśalā had taken every care and practised discipline for the safety and good of the child she had conceived. She took very meagre meals during her pregnancy. She avoided all kinds of rich and harmful food. She lived on a balanced diet. She tried to keep herself as cheerful as she could by avoiding sadness, anxiety, anger, hatred, jealousy, envy etc. She kept the entire atmosphere cheerful and sweet. She walked slowly, spoke in soft tones and never laughed aloud. She would not sit under the open sky and

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would not make any kind of hurry. The best development of the child takes place in the womb of mother. The mother is to a very large extent responsible for the development. The mother who knows her responsibility will certainly give birth to a child which is beautiful, enlightened and valorous. An ignorant mother, on the other hand, gives birth to a child who is ugly, unintelligent and timid. Triśalā fulfilled her responsibility successfully. Therefore, she gave birth to a child fully beautiful and possessed of the best qualities.

The child was born with divine characteristics. He commanded a wonderful form. His breath was sweet and fragrant. It made the whole atmosphere saturated with a sweet smell. It was a wonderful thing. It was an indication of the fact that the child would be the *dharma-cakravartī*. The purity of the soul destroys all the ailments of the body.

Thousands of people came to have a look at the extraordinary child and they became exhilarated by the sweet odour its body emitted.

The child was born at a wonderful moment. The breeze was mild and pure. It blew soft. It was spring. The woods were articulate and the trees had become laden with new leaves. It was the thirteenth day of the bright half of the lunar month of *Caitra*. It was the time of midnight. The portents were

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auspicious. The planets stood high. Nature greeted the birth of the child with all her cheerfulness and grandeur.

The darkness of the night disappeared and rays of the sun brightened every particle of the earth. Nature began to appear neat and clean. At this sacred hour, Siddhārtha was informed by a slave girl that the queen had been delivered of a son. The king's heart began to throb with joy which knew no bounds. He rewarded the slave girl with invaluable presents and accorded to her the status of a free citizen for ever. This emancipation of the slave girl was a symbol of the charity. The new-born prince was to practise in the future.

The king called the Chief Minister and ordered him to celebrate the happy birth of the prince in the most befitting manner. The capital was profusely decorated and prisoners were ordered to be released from the prison as is done on such occasions. The happy occasion was to be celebrated with all pomp and show and gaiety. The king expressed the wish that all commodities should be sold in the market at cheaper prices and that the poor should be fed free. The shopkeepers were to be compensated for the loss they would suffer. The king's wish was announced to the citizens in no time to their great pleasure. The whole day was spent by the people in

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joyous festivities. The celebrations lasted for seven days to the great comfort of the poor.

Vardhamāna

Name and form are the basic constituents of the universe. The king's son had been born with a beautiful form. He had yet to be named. The king invited all his relatives to a grand feast. The question of giving a name to the child came up for consideration. It was customary for the parents to choose a name for their child. The king observed : "Ever since Triśalā had conceived the child, our family has grown richer in every respect. Prosperity has been followed by increasing love among the members of family. Keeping in mind all this, I like to name the child as Vardhamāna (literally meaning ever-prospering)." The queen agreed with the king and the child acquired the name Vardhamāna.

The child never wept nor laughed. He always remained in a contented mood and a strange aura shone on his face. He was quite active like a growing child but never restive. Even as a small child, he appeared to be unattached to everything. He did not seem to have any physical attraction towards food and play. His spiritual growth made all the things of the world appear to be devoid of any kind of attraction for him. This state of his being hinted towards his great future.

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Fearlessness and Exertion of Spiritual Vigour

Success in life depends on two factors : wisdom and energy. Knowledge unattended by power is pitiable and power uncontrolled by wisdom is dangerous. A harmonious combination of the two makes a man fearless and strong. Vardhamāna possessed both in equal proportion. He was never touched by any kind of fear.

Once his playmates persuaded him to play the *Āmalakī* game with them. They played in the garden of the house. All the children ran towards the tree. Vardhamāna outran everyone else and climbed up the tree. When he was coming down, he saw a huge snake coiling around the trunk of the tree. The snake hissed at the sight of Vardhamāna. Struck with fear the rest of the children ran away. Vardhamāna, however, remained unruffled. He caught hold of the snake and disentangling it from the tree threw it away. He climbed down the tree and his playmates applauded him. He had won the game.

Vardhamāna was hardly eight years old, but his fearlessness and strength came to be recognised even at that tender age. Being born in a family of the Kṣatriya he began to exhibit the character of a Kṣatriya. He was also born with the accumulated strength of *sādhanā* he had performed in the course

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of his previous lives. The spiritual and physical growth impressed everyone.

Vardhamāna was a very respectful child. He was very much devoted and obedient to his parents. As his extra-sensory knowledge had already become well-developed, he was conversant with what was being taught at school. Yet he joined school simply because he had been commanded to do so. The teacher welcomed him and he joined his companions. It is said that Indra, the king of gods, disguised himself as a Brāhmaṇa and came to the school to test Vardhamāna. He came to Vardhamāna and asked him several questions about letters and their combinations. The child's answers were grammatically so much of a higher standard that the Brāhmaṇa Indra suggested to the teacher that the child was master of subjects taught in that kind of a school, and hence needed no more schooling.

The teacher felt himself to be too small before Vardhamāna. He asked the latter to remove his confusion in matters of teaching. The child did so easily and promptly. Vardhamāna was removed from the school and the king was told that he had done his schooling. Vardhamāna relatives now began to acknowledge the depth of his knowledge too. It is really more difficult to fathom person's internal depth than the external one.

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Detachment and Marriage

Time moves on. It is never at a stand-still. Vardhamāna grew up and stood at the threshold of youth. He commanded a very healthy, beautiful and strong personality.

It was time to think of the marriage of the young prince. The king and the queen considered the matter. Jitaśatru, the King of Kaliṅga, sent an envoy to Siddhārtha with the proposal of the marriage of his daughter with Vardhamāna. The king and the queen accept the proposal of Jitaśatru.

When his father informed Vardhamāna of the acceptance of the proposal of the latter's marriage, the prince found himself in a strange situation. Marriage implies duality. One has to enter into worldly relations with another being. The husband's consciousness will have to be diverted to the external world. Vardhamāna was unwilling.

The prince lived in the royal palace surrounded by relatives, servants and all kinds of prosperity and comforts but his mind was turned inwards into the depths of the self. His tendencies had become spiritualized. Man's ego remains shared by the attractions of the world when his spiritual consciousness is undeveloped. Once the spirit wakes up, sensuous pleasures do not attract him any more and the world begins to appear to be tasteless.

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Vardhamāna's spirit had attained this stature and he lived in the world unattached like the lotus in the pond. He observed strict austerity in matter of food. This was resented by all. They failed to appreciate his abstinence. Similarly they could not understand the attitude of compassion and equality which the prince adopted towards everyone.

Mahābhiniṣkramaṇa (The Great Renunciation)

At the age of twenty-eight, his parents passed away. The royal family was plunged into sorrow as a result of their death. The prince loved his parents, but their death did not affect him at all. The spiritual heights he had attained made him averse to pleasures and pains. He was not a sheer philosopher. He had a direct perception of Truth. He did not take death seriously. It was to him a normal happening in life.

The ties of affection which bound him to his parents broke. His resolve to serve his parents during their life-time had served its purpose. There now arose in him the great desire to renounce the world. He apprised his elder brother of his intention. Nandivardhana was shocked to hear of his plans. His whole being trembled and he began to weep. He had hardly recovered from the shock of the death of his parents when he was called upon to face a new situation. The death of the near and dear ones does

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produce a mood of aversion to the world. One who has a spiritual inclination is all the more prone to the desire for renunciation. Nandivardhana felt that his younger brother had been seized of a strong inclination to renounce the world, but he felt nervous and was unwilling to part with in company of his younger brother at this stage. He would not be able to stand two successive shocks.

Prince Vardhamāna did not like to cause any kind of inconvenience to anybody. His mind was full of love and compassion and this forced him to remain with his family for another two years. He had developed the feeling of complete equality with all the living beings of the world. He saw life in raw water and left using it. He acquired complete control over his sense-organs. He had mastered the process of meditation with a full control over his speech. Although he lived in the family, his life was that of a recluse. He still had the responsibilities of his family on him and could not be called a recluse even.

Though he led a worldly life, his mind remained occupied with the idea of renouncing the world. He did not like wealth accumulating in the hands of a few. Every morning he would give up a part of his wealth and income, and share them with thousands of needy persons. This continued for a full year.

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Two years went by. He, therefore, placed again his proposal to leave the family before brother Nandivardhana and uncle Supārśva. They agreed with him. The Great Exit took place at the *muhūrta* called *Vijaya*, in the third quarter of the tenth day of the first half of the lunar month of Mārgaśīrṣa in the season of Hemanta (autumn) (corresponding to the month of November).

Prince Vardhamāna had been fasting for the last two days. He had a peculiar way of fasting because he was realizing that his body was entirely different from his soul. One who is not able to distinguish between the soul and the body attaches value to the body, but one who has the right knowledge to distinguish between the two puts a premium on the soul alone. For him living for the body is no life at all. He lives in order to liberate the soul from the bondage of the world. Only those who have attained self-enlightenment can renounce the world.

Vardhamāna's renunciation was marked by rejoicings in the family. Young girls sang songs of joy and the sky resounded with the music of instruments. The bards recited auspicious hymns. There was a happy motion everywhere.

Seated in a palanquin the prince left home for the Jñātakhaṇḍa forest. Nandivardhana and Supārśva

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and a crowd of thousands of people ascorted him to the forest. The prince alighted from the palanquin, stood under an *Aśoka* tree, took off the householder's garments and became a *nirgrantha* (ascetic). The strain of music stopped and everyone began to gaze at the prince. Nature seemed to be engulfed in a strange calmness. The prince plucked off the hair of his head and stood looking towards the horizon between the east and the north. His face beamed with joy and a divine light shone on his forehead. The whole atmosphere pulsated with joy and enthusiasm. Folding both his hands, the prince said, "I bow to the Perfect Beings." As soon as he had dedicated himself to the attainment of liberation, his egotism and attachment disappeared. He resolved whole-heartedly to follow the principle of equanimity and not to do any action born of attachment or aversion. Attachment and aversion give birth to inequality and sin. One who renounces passions becomes unfettered *nirgrantha*. A *nirgrantha* is one who is free from inhibitions. Prince Vardhamāna assumed the status of Śramaṇa Vardhamāna in the presence of the people of Kṣatriya Kuṇḍapura. He no more belonged to the kingdom he had left behind. He had now entered into an empire where there were no rulers and the ruled. He left behind the ties of his family and entered into a new family where there was no distinction between

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'mine' and 'thine'. Thousands of people shed teas to see him leave the boundaries of Kṣatriya Kuṇḍapura and followed him feeling sad at the solemn parting. It is a strange custom of the world to treat one as our own till he lives with us and to treat him as a stranger as soon as he had estranged himself from us. Śramaṇa Vardhamāna now appeared to be such a stranger to the people of Kṣatriya Kuṇḍapura. Vardhamāna remarkedè

"Now I am a Śramaṇa. I have risen above the limitations of the state and the nation. You are the citizens of a state living within its boundaries. No boundaries surround me. I am a wandering'ascetic. How far will you be able to accompany mel?" He then took leave of the followers and went ahead alone. The last stage or the individual's development is a state of loneliness. Śramaṇa Vardhamāna appeared to be an example of this. He transcended the limitations of time and space, completely cut off from his people. People watched him disappear in the distance and returned home. Nandivardhana took charge of the affairs of the State and Śramaṇa Vardhamāna installed himself as the emperor of the Kingdom of the Spirit. Nandivardhana's duties were of a gross and simple nature; those of Śramaṇa Vardhamāna were subtle and complex. But he was bent on changing the complex into the simple.

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III

THE PERIOD OF SĀDHANĀ (SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE)

The Sacred Grove

After becoming an ascetic, Vardhamāna needed no security. He was no longer a private individual now. He began to treat everyone as a welcome visitor with whatever purpose he came. His life of spiritual discipline began with the resolution : "I dedicate myself to the highest liberation. I shall no longer be interested in my physical body and shall bear all kinds of calamities whether they are brought about by gods, human agencies or animals. I shall in no case deviate from the path of *sādhanā*."

His *sādhanā* began with the above resolutions. His will-power began to exert itself. Only he who fears needs security. Śramaṇa Vardhamāna had shed all fear.

Fear is born of the desire for possessions or possessiveness. Vardhamāna became fearless, because he had assumed an attitude of non-possession.

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Fear takes root in us when we feel that we have enemies. Vardhamāna became fearless because he assumed an attitude of friendliness towards everyone.

He began to traverse the path leading to infinity. He never thought of what was going to happen to him the next day. He did not care for food, shelter and the inclemency of the weather. All the anxieties disappeared with the renunciation of his interest in his body. He had already discarded his clothes and began to wander naked. The shades of the forest trees served as a home for him. Sometimes he took shelter in houses which had been abandoned or in sequestered temples. Only those who are habituated to putting on clothes, eating regular meals and living in sheltered houses feel difficulties when they do not get these. Vardhamāna put on the clothes of self-certainty, began to live in the home of consciousness and to draw strength from subtle spiritual world. He experienced no difficulty.

Having left Kṣatriya Kuṇḍapura he arrived at Karmāragrāma in the evening. He remained standing in a state of meditation near the village. The first day here was the day of test for him.

A farm-boy happened to return to the village from the farm. He had a pair of bullocks with him. He saw the monk standing there. In anticipation that

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he would look after his bullocks, he left the bullocks with Vardhamāna and went away. The bullocks began to graze and in a short time strayed far away. Vardhamāna was all along lost into the depths of his soul in a state of intense meditation. It had grown completely dark and nothing was visible. The farm-boy returned after having milked his cows in the village. He could not trace his bullocks. He enquired of Vardhamāna about them. Getting no reply from the Śramaṇa he went about in search of them. He searched for them till late in the night but in vain. He was now so tired that he fell asleep. He got up early in the morning and again began the search for his bullocks but again in vain. When he was again returning to the village, he found the bullocks standing near the monk. The boy began to feel suspicious about the Śrarmaṇa whom he thought to be a *thug*. He thought that the Śramaṇa would steal the bullocks away. Wrong conviction enraged the farm-boy so much so that he rushed at the Śramaṇa to strike him with the rope he carried. It was a strange coincidence that as the farm-boy raised the rope to strike, Nandivardhana suddenly arrived at the spot.[1] He intervened and persuaded the farm-boy to go. Then he said to the Śramaṇa, "Till yesterday you had commanded the status of a prince.

1. There is also a hersy that Indra arrived at the spot.

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Nobody could dare to offend you. Today you are in the position of an insignificant man. It's a pity, you have no security arrangements. It's intolerable. Let me make security arrangements for you."

Śramaṇa Vardhamāna replied with a smile on his lips, "Whose security ? I have deliberately chosen the path of equanimity. I have willingly adopted the path of *ahiṁsā*. I do not know who needs the security you are speaking of. I am no more in an egocentric body. I am now firmly entrenched in myself. Why should I then be afraid of death ? Those who have a longing for life, fear death. I know what life and death are. One who does not run after sensuous pleasure will never be afraid of misery. I have begun to treat pleasure and pain and life and death alike. I am perfectly secure.

Only he who has no fears can protect others. He who has a longing for life and fears death cannot protect anybody. How can you then protect me ?"

Nandivardhana was stunned to hear this. He could not speak any more although he wanted to. Composing himself a little, he cleverly said, "Sir, you are a Mahāvīra (a great hero). How can I provide security for you ? But if you like, I intend to help you a little."

The Śramaṇa replied, "That is also not possible. An *arhat* needs no help from others. The

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arhats never needed, don't need now nor in the future shall need any help at all. They achieve the state of perfect knowledge as well as *mokṣa* or liberation through their own spiritual exertion. It is their own strength that helps them."

After this bold declaration Śramaṇa Vardhamāna came to be known as *Mahāvīra*. Nandivardhana said, "Bhagavān, you are indeed a Mahāvīra. Your resolution, your forbearance, your constancy and your spiritual achievements are really great. You are a great hero."

Bhagavān Mahāvīra experienced Truth within himself. It is true that once we get attached to the external world, we lose sight of the Existence within and also that once we become absorbed in the Existence within, we become free from the worries of the external world. Mahāvīra had now attained this state. Therefore, he did not care a fig for anything including his body, life and death. Absolutely contented and carefree, he began to lead the life of a wandering ascetic.

Mahāvīra wandered from place to place. He was of the opinion that one whose mind is not stable will not be able to concentrate even if he did not wander. On the other hand a wandering state will have the least effect on him whose mind is fixed.

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All Living Beings are Equal

Once Bhagavān Mahāvīra was going to northern Vācālā through the hermitage of Kanakakhala. When the cow-boys saw him, they came to him running and said, "Sir, the path through which you are going is a short-cut, no doubt, but it is fraught with dangers. A little ahead there is a snake called Caṇḍakauśika. The person on whom it casts a glance would be burnt to ashes." They advised him to take another route and not to play havoc with life on purpose. Mahāvīra had risen above life and death which are like the two facets of a coin. He had become totally immersed in his soul which transcends life and death. He did not heed the warning given to him by the cow-boys and proceeded forward. He had adopted an equalitarian attitude towards all living beings. He walked up to the interior of the forest and began to meditate in a standing position.

The snake appeared on the scene after it had taken a round of the hermitage. It became suddenly enraged when it sensed that somebody stood before it. It could not tolerate the man encroaching upon his domain. It spread its hood, looked at the sun and then at Bhagavān Mahāvīra. The serpent began to spray its poison which spread over the aura around Mahāvīra's body. The entire atmosphere became poisoned. but Bhagavān Mahāvīra remained

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unaffected. He stood motionless in an atmosphere surcharged with poison. An endless stream of spiritual companion flowed from his steady gaze at the snake. There ensued a duel between love and rage, nectar and poison.

Seeing all this, the snake could not believe his eyes. It was a new experience for it. It again tried to cast a dangerously poisonous glance at Bhagavān Mahāvīra but could not succeed. While the serpent sprayed poison at him, he continued to look at it kindly. It was a strange tussle between love and anger. The snake bit the foot of Bhagavān Mahāvīra and blood began to flow from it. The snake began to suck the blood but to his surprise he found that it was not blood he was sucking, but milk. The snake bit Bhagavān Mahāvīra's foot a second and then a third time and every time it felt that only milk flowed from the victim's body. The serpent coiled round the body of Bhagavān Mahāvīra but he could not upset him. The snake lost its self-confidence and presumptuousness. It's anger disappeared and it became calm. It ate a humble pie. It's grip on Bhagavān Mahāvīra's body began to become loose. Love became victorious. When Bhagavān Mahāvīra's meditation was over, he saw the motionless snake sitting docilely before him. He addressed the snake thus : "Caṇḍakauśika, be calm ! You are born as a

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snake because you had been a victim of anger in your previous life. Then you had been ascetic. You had once trampled to death a frog. One of your disciples had entreated you to do a penance for the sin but you refused to do so."

"Enraged by the repeated entreaties of the disciple, you tried to strike him and having lost the sense of proportion you crashed against a pillar and broke your head. In the, next life, you became the head of this hermitage where the inmates practised spiritual discipline. As you were prone to great anger, you were named Caṇḍakauśika. Once the prince of Śvetāmbi came to your hermitage and while he was plucking fruits and flowers you became so much enraged that you ran after him with an axe in your hand. You slipped on the ground and fell into a ditch and were fatally injured by your own axe. After the death, there you are as a reborn deadly poisonous serpent. You have already suffered much due to your passionate nature. Leave the passion of anger like your worn-out skin and be peaceful once for all."

Caṇḍakauśika began to remember its past life. All the events of that life began to float in its memory. His heart changed and the seeds of equalitarianism for all living beings began to sprout in him.

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Bhagavān Mahāvīra went to Uttaravācālā to break his fast. He would not accept food especially prepared for him. Whatever food he got already cooked, he accepted it.

During the period of his *sādhanā*, Bhagavān Mahāvīra mostly observed fast. The days of fasting outnumbered those of taking meals.

Bhagavān Mahāvīra performed *sādhanā* for twelve years and six and a half months. Most of this period was spent in meditation and he spoke little. For a few years he lived alone and for some time he was accompanied by Gośālaka. He patiently bore the inclemency of the weather as well as hardships caused by men, beasts and god. These outward happenings would not affect him at all.

Emancipation of a Slave-Girl

It was the twelfth year of Bhagavān Mahāvīra's *sādhanā*. He was putting up in Kauśāmbī. He had developed super-sensory knowledge ever since his birth. The moment he became an ascetic, he developed another kind of knowledge the perception of thoughts of other people's minds. He was now about to attain the *kevalajñāna*—omniscience. At this juncture, he decided to perform an experiment. Women and slaves led a wretched life those days. Religious prejudices had deprived women of the

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privilege of being treated equal to men. The masters treated the slaves as cattle and could punish them in any cruel way they liked. Neither the law nor any conscious religious opposition could interfere with this cruelty. This orgy of violence continued for centuries together in the name of custom, religion and fate.

On the first day of the dark half of the lunar month of Pauṣa, Bhagavān Mahāvīra resolved to accept food under particular conditions only. This resolution went a long way to mitigate social injustice. Of course, he did not disclose this to anybody. Spiritual forces control the world in their own way by changing heart and correcting mental attitudes. The minds of the people of Kauśāmbī were thoroughly shaken by the revolutionary plan of Bhagavān Mahāvīra within six months. He went out to collect food on the first day of the month. He visited several families and was greeted with great esteem. He was offered food everywhere but he returned without accepting anything from anybody. People wondered as to why he had not accepted food anywhere. Nobody could understand him.

One day Bhagavān Mahāvīra visited the house of the minister Sugupta. Sugupta's wife Nandā was very much devoted to Bhagavān Mahāvīra. She insisted the Bhagavān on accepting food which she

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offered. Although the food was acceptable, Bhagavān Mahāvīra returned as usual without accepting it. Nandā became sad. She came to know from the gossip among the servants that Bhagavān Mahāvīra had not been taking any food for the last four months. This made Nandā all the more impatient.

When Sugupta came home to lunch, he asked his wife the reason of her sadness. She told him what had happened.

Śatānīka was then the ruler of Kauśāmbī. His queen, Mṛgāvatī, was the daughter of King Ceṭaka. One of her attendants, named Vijayā, happened to visit the house of the minister. She gathered what had been happening and informed her mistress Mṛgāvatī who consulted her husband about the matter. There was a lot of talk about it in the whole of the Kingdom.

The king and the minister tried their best to persuade Bhagavān Mahāvīra to accept food but in vain. His visits to the families and his returning without accepting food continued for five months and twentyfive days. On the twentysixth day he visited the house of Śreṣṭhī Dhanāvaha. There Bhagavān Mahāvīra saw a girl with shaven head standing on the threshold. Her legs had been chained. After a three-day fast, she had been given

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a few boiled pulses in a winnower. Though born as a princess, she was then living the life of a slave-girl. There was the opportunity for Bhagavān Mahāvīra to translate his resolution into practice. On seeing Bhagavān Mahāvīra, she became extremely happy and forgot her miserable lot. She offered boiled pulses to him from her winnowing basket. She saw Bhagavān Mahāvīra approaching her to collect food, but alas, the very next moment she saw him turning back. He did not accept the food, so she became sad. She suddenly began to shed tears and sobbed. Tears rolling down her cheeks fulfilled all the conditions of Bhagavān's resolution. Mahāvīra returned and accepted the pulses he had been offered.

The news that Bhagavān Mahāvīra had accepted food from the slave-girl of Śreṣṭhī Dhanāvaha became the talk of the town. King Śatānīka and queen Mṛgāvatī came to the house of the Śresthi to congratulate the slave-girl. They were surprised to see that the slave-girl was none other than Chandanabālā, the daughter of King Dadhivāhana of Campā and wondered how she had been made a slave. (Chandanabālā's mother happened to be the sister of Queen Mṛgāvatī). When the people came to know the miserable plight of this girl, they began to become critical of the social customs based on iniustice to human beings. They

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remarked, "Alas, if even a princess can be sold in a social system, just imagine what can become of others.' It was a great challenge to the age-old institution of slavery. The first consequence of the great stir was that Chandanabālā was released and emancipated.

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IV

KAIVALYA (OMNISCIENCE) AND THE BHAGAVĀN'S SERMONS

Bhagavān Mahāvīra spent twelve years in the *sādhanā* of meditation and self-discipline. He spent another six months and the seventh month was running. It was the tenth day of bright half of the lunar month of Vaiśākha. It was the time of afternoon and the *vijaya muhūrta* had arrived. Bhagavān Mahāvīra was camping on the river Ṛjubālukā on the outskirts of the village Jambhiyagrāma. He sat in the posture of a meditator in the rays of the sun near a *sāla* tree in the farm of Śyāmāk. He had been fasting and had not taken even water for the last two days. In the state of deep meditation, he established himself in perfect equanimity, extirpated the *karmas* responsible for delusion, ignorance, imperception and spiritual weakness and at once he attained the state of *kaivalya* or omniscience.

His period of sādhanā came to an end with the attainment of *kaivalya*. He now came to perceive and know the whole of reality directly. He had a direct

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perception of his own self as well as the entire world. He became omniscient.

THE FIRST SERMON

The fourfold path

Having attained kaīvalya Bhagavān Mahāvīra in the first sermon explained the fourfold path of self-realisation :—

1. *Samyak darśana*—Spiritual experience of Reality or Faith in Truth.
2. *Samyak jñāna*—Knowledge of Reality.
3. *Samyak cāritra*—Spiritual Discipline, and
4. *Samyalk tapa*—The washing off of the effects of accumulated *karmas* through right austerities.

The world consists of two types of basic substances the soul and the non-soul. A soul or ātima bound by a body is called jiva or an embodied soul. A free or a disembodied soul is called Paramātmā (Perfect Soul). That which causes transformation of the soul into the perfect soul is called dharma or religion.

Muni-Dharma (Asceticism)

The Principle of Equalitarianism comprises *dharma* and its opposite is *adharma*. All the living beings are equal to each other insofar as their

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potentialities are concerned. No living being is smaller or greater in this respect. From the point of view of their development, the living beings can be classified into six categories :—

1. Beings with earth-bodies viz. mineral substances.
2. Beings with water-bodies.
3. Beings with fire-bodies.
4. Beings with air-bodies.
5. Vegetation beings composed of vegetation bodies.
6. Mobile living beings.

1. Bhagavān Mahāvīra preached non-violence and said—

Don't kill any living being.

Don't cause pain to anybody.

Don't impose yourself on anybody.

Don't bind and enslave anybody.

This is the Principle of Equalitarianism. This is the religion of *ahiṁsā* (i.e. non-violence). It is the Eternal Religion.

The following are the constituents of the Religion of Equalitarianism :

- Don't be afraid of anybody, nor terrorise anybody.

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- Don't consider yourself nor others to be wretched.
- Don't cherish hatred towards anybody.
- Don't be sorry if you do not'get what you have desired and don't be joyous if you get it.
- Don't be elated in your happiness and dejected in your misery.
- Don't be attached to life nor be afraid of death.
- Don't be puffed up by flattery nor be upset by criticism.
- Ahimsa consists in attitude of equanimity.

2. Bhagavān Mahāvīra's sermon on truth:

Truth is Supreme. Truth is the essence of the world.

Truth is the Eternal Religion. In order to practise truth—

- Don't practise falsehood even through bodily actions.
- Be straight-forward and ingenuous by expressing the same feelings which you have in your mind.
- Speak the truth and don't tell a lie.
- Don't be double, tongued and maintain a balance between what you say and what you do.

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- Don't be prone to anger.
- Don't be covetous.
- Don't be afraid.
- Don't indulge in revelry.

3. The sermon on non-stealing :

Control your desires. One who does not do so, encroaches upon the rights and property of others. This results in conflicts and the feelings of jealousy and enmity. These give birth to passions of attachment and aversion, and they in their turn produce delusion which ultimately results in misery. You cannot get rid of miseries without controlling desires.

Control of desires is the Eternal Religion. In order to practise it—

- Keep your needs at the minimum and don't use things unnecessarily.
- Discriminate between what is necessary and what is not.

4. The Sermon on celebacy :

Control of the sexual desire is the key to the control of all kinds of attachments. One who has crossed the ocean can easily cross the river.

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Celebacy is the Eternal Religion. In order to practise it—

- Control your speech.
- Control your eyes.
- Don't recall the past enjoyments.
- Control your food habits.

Practise looking within the soul.

5. The sermon on non-possessiveness

A covetous man creates enemies. Therefore don't put premium on possession.

Non-attachment is the Eternal Religion. In order to, practise it :

- Don't be attached to sounds.
- Don't be attached to beauty.
- Don't be attached to fragrance.
- Don't be attached to tastes.
- Don't be attached to touch.

The rules of *samiti* and *gupti* are meant for the practice of *ahiṁsā*.

1. *Īryā Samiti*—Walking in a disciplined way.
2. *Bhāṣā Samiti*—Speaking in a disciplined way.
3. *Eṣeṇā Samiti*—Accepting food in accordance with the rules of begging, and eating food in a disciplined way.

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4. *Ādāna Nikṣepa Samiti*—Using equipments and utensils in a disciplined way.
5. *Utsarga Samiti*—Disposal of excreta in a disciplined way.
6. Discipline of the mental activities.
7. Observance of silence.
8. Control of physical actions.

The Householder's Way for the Practice of Religion

After having laid down a discipline for the monks, Bhagavān Mahāvīra laid down the rules of conduct for the householders also. He said that although the householders cannot be free from the responsibilities concerning the family, the society, the state etc., yet they should observe the follow- ing minor vows :—

1. Renunciation of gross violence.
2. Renunciation of gross untruth.
3. Renunciation of gross stealing.
4. Continence.
5. To limit desires-to put a limit to possession of wealth etc. The householder should practise the following teachings in order to strengthen the above- mentioned minor vows :—

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1. Confining oneself to a certain geographical area, one should not commit violence, etc. beyond it.
2. One should not consume things beyond a certain limit.
3. One should renounce things which are not necessary.
4. One should practise equanimity.
5. One should put a limit even to routine engagements necessary for life.
6. One should remain absorbed in the self by fasting.
7. One should part with a portion of daily necessities, and offer them to ascetics.

Men benighted by false beliefs, attachments and indulgence were enlightened by Bhagavān Mahāvīra's call to practise right belief, unattachment and discipline. Thousands became ready to follow his path.

Stress on Inwardness

A widespread prevalence of rites and rituals had made the people extrovert even in matters of ethical values. In order to bring about a revolutionary change, Bhagavān Mahāvīra asked the people to give importance to inwardness. It was a common belief among the people that one became a Śramaṇa by simply shaving the head, a Brāhmaṇa by merely

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repeating the sound of *Omkāra*, a *muni* by merely living in the forests and a *tapasvī* (hermit) by putting on clothes made of the barks of trees. He insisted on their recognition through their internal qualities. A *Śramaṇa* must practise *samatā* equanimity, a *Brāhmaṇa* must practise *brahmacharya* celebacy, a *muni* must seek after knowledge (moṇa) and a *tapasvī* must observe austerities.

Equality of Human Beings

Bhagavān Mahāvīra rejected casteism as an arbitrary doctrine. He stressed the fact that one could be called a *Brāhmaṇa*, a *Kṣaitiya*, a *Vaiśya* or *Śūdra* only on the basis of his conduct. The *Varṇa* organization had been made by men. It could not be accepted as made by God.

The Soul itself is the Perfect Soul

Man is the maker of his own fate. He is the author of his own happiness and misery. There does not exist any external agency as God which governs man's actions. The soul itself is the Perfect Soul by dissolving *karmas*. Bhagavān Mahāvīra aroused the Perfect Soul immanent in the Soul of all living beings.

Puruṣārtha (Spiritual Exertion)

People afflicted with passivity and laziness were inspired with the ideal of spiritual exertion by

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Bhagavān Mahāvīra. He said to man, "O man, Exert yourself. If you do not use your inherent spiritual powers, you will remain devoid of spiritual wealth."

His message was : "Exert yourself in spiritual discipline so long as you remain unaffected of by old age, disease and senility." Bhagavān Mahāvīra did not reject the effects of past actions (popularly known as fate) but he tried to free man from the shackles of fatalism, resulting from lack of exerting oneself. Bhagavān Mahāvīra stood for the doctrine of synthesis. He extolled neither absolute fate nor absolute exertion. He synthesised both. This new trend freed the Indian society from faith in miracles, passivity and stupour and inculcated in them the force of realism, manliness and awakening. He enlivened the soul of India.

SECOND SERMON

Eleven Theses

Bhagavān Mahāvīra delivered his second sermon in the Mahāsena gardens of the city Madhyama Pāvāpurī on the eleventh day of the bright half of the lunar month of Vaiśākha. In this sermon, he propounded the reality of the human soul.

A *Brāhmaṇa* named Somila had organised a great sacrifice on that day. Many learned men came

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to participate in the sacrifice. Indrabhūti Gautama was the chief among these learned *Brāhmaṇas*. He was apprised of the presence of Bhagavān Mahāvīra there. The overweening Brāhmaṇa came to the Mahāsena Gardens to defeat the Bhagavān in a debate.

Bhagavān Mahāvīra was omniscient. He knew the thoughts of Indrabhūti. Revealing what Indrabhūti was thinking, Bhagavān Mahāvīra said, "Indrabhūti, you consider yourself a great scholar of the Vedic Scriptures, still you are sceptical about the existence of the soul. Isn't it so ?" Indrabhūti was stunned to hear this reading of his mind by the Bhagavān. By unveiling the doubt hidden in his mind, Bhagavān Mahāvīra at once won his veneration.

Enquiring rather in a submissive voice, Indrabhūti said, "Does the soul exist ? How do you, Sir, assert its existence ?"

The Bhagavān said, "Yes, Gautama, the soul exists. I have perceived it. I assert its existence on the basis of my direct knowledge of the soul."

Indrabhūti said, "Sir, I am a student of Logic. Don't you explain the existence of the soul in terms of Logic?" Bhagavān Mahāvīra replied, "The soul is non-perceptible to senses. The domain of Reason (or Logic) is limited only to those objects which are

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perceptible to senses. Where there is Direct Cognition, reason is rendered redundant''. And, here, indeed, a logician felt himself helpless before a Direct Perceiver. He submitted himself to the Bhagavān along with his five hundred followers. He became a disciple of Bhagavān Mahāvīra.

Bhagavān Mahāvīra resolved the doubt of all the eleven scholars and they became the disciples of Bhagavān Mahāvīra along with their own disciples.

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V

FOUNDATION OF RELIGIOUS ORDER

Initiation of Women

Bhagavān Mahāvīra propounded the Doctrine of Soul *(ātman)*, according to which 'soul' is the principal or the most fundamental point of consideration while evaluating any living being. Qualification of 'being a human being' was secondary in his view. Secondly, he was also a 'humanitarian' in the sense that he gave importance only to the quality of 'being a human being'; he gave the least importance to other considerations such as caste and sex.

Candanabālā expressed her wish to be initiated as a nun. There were a few other women with her. They too wanted to be initiated. Bhagavān Mahāvīra initiated all of them as nuns.

Bhagavān Mahāvīra founded a fourfold tīrtha comprising of the monks, the nuns, *śrāvakās* and *śrāvikās*. Bhagavān Mahāvīra is known as a *tīrthaṅkara*, (i.e., propounder of *tīrtha*) because he

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enunciated the fundamental doctrine of *dharma*. The teachings propounded by one who has accomplished self-realization never fail. The teachings of Bhagavān Mahāvīra had the same effect. They got materialized into an organization a religious order or *tīrtha*. It kept these teachings intact and is even now preserving them.

The Gospel of Anekanta

Indrabhūti Gautama was an erudite and versatile scholar having encyclopaedic knowledge. But his knowledge resulted in turning him extremely self-conceited. It is a common saying that learning purges man of egotism and makes him humble. But it is a common experience that it creates a superiority complex and reduces humility in man. Which is true—the common saying or the common experience ? The doctrine of anekānta would hold that both of them are true. In the context of the spiritual learning, the former is found true, while in the context of the mundane knowledge, the latter holds good. No sooner did Indrabhūti enter the domain of the spiritual learning than his egotism evaporated, and he was filled with a sense of modesty. A new thirst for knowledge was awakened in him. He approached Bhagavān Mahāvīra and asked him enquiringly, "Bhagavān, what is Reality ?"

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Bhagavān Mahāvīra replied, "Becoming." Gautama repeated his question, "What is Reality ?" Bhagavān Mahāvīra replied, "Non-becoming." Gautama repeated his question again, "What is Reality ?" Bhagavān Mahāvīra replied, "Being."

Bhagavān Mahāvīra revealed to Gautama the basic formula of the theory of *anekārta* in the form of this triade becoming, i.e., coming into existence, non-becoming, i.e., ceasing to exist, and being, i.e., subsisting.

Thus he imparted to him the essence of his philosophy.

The eternalists held that reality is eternal, while the non- eternalists believed it to be transitory. Bhagavān Mahāvīra did not agree with either. According to him, there is nothing either absolutely eternal or absolutely transitory. He professed that the reality is a synthesis of eternity and transitoriness. Reality is transitory because it is possessed of becoming and non-becoming. But it is eternal because by its very nature, it is subsistent. The reality is a synthesis of becoming, non-becoming and being.

In this discourse, Bhagavān Mahāvīra enlightened Gautama to comprehend the reality in the right perspective.

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Gautama imbibed the doctrine of *anekānta* on the basis of which he compiled Bhagavān Mahāvīra's teachings in the twelve *aṅgas* (canons). The following are the twelve *aṅgas*—

1. *Ācārāṅga*
2. *Sūtrakṛtāṅga*
3. *Sthānāṅga*
4. *Samavāyāṅga*
5. *Bhagavatī*
6. *Jñātadharmakathā*
7. *Upāsakadasā*
8. *Antakṛddasā*
9. *Anuttaropapātikadasā*
10. *Praśnavyākaraṇa*
11. *Vipāka*
12. *Dṛṣṭivāda*

Like Bible and Quran, the Jain holy books are known as agama (canon).

Like Gautama many other scholars attended Bhagavān Mahāvīra's discourse. Bhagavān Mahāvīra enlightened them with the philosophy of *anekānta* and sharpened their spiritual propensities.

The Organization of the Monastic Order

Bhagavān Mahāvīra was the apostle of ahimsā (non-violence) and equality. Freedom is the

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concomitant result of *ahiṁsā*. Bhagavān Mahāvīra propounded the path of emancipation. This path comprises spiritual discipline and self-control, but it is free from all kinds of regimentation.

Inspired by the teachings of Bhagavān Mahāvīra women belonging to all the castes, families and classes became initiated as the members of the Order. Several queens of Śreṇika, the Emperor of Magadha, were initiated. Queens of other kings and wives of the feudal lords and merchant-princes also joined the Order of nuns. The great nun Candanabālā, as the able leader of the nuns, efficiently guided them.

Bhagavān Mahāvīra was an exponent of both the aspects of truth—the objective as well as the pragmatic.

"If one wants to practise the religion of the Jina, he should keep in mind both kinds of truth, the objective and the pragmatic. If you discard the former, you will be estranged from the truth and, if you discard the latter, you will be deprived of a well-organized religious Order."

It is on the basis of this principle that the Jaina religious Order embodies even today both—the truth and a superb organization.'

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VI

TRANSVALUATION

After attaining the omniscience he began to propound the eternal *Dharma*. He uplifted the common people to a higher moral and spiritual standard and satisfied their desire for knowledge.

Once he left Vaiśālī for Kausambī where Jayantī, the sister of King Śatānika, asked him a few questions :—

"Lord ! what is better for the living beings to sleep or to keep waking ?"

Bhagavān Mahāvīra : "Both sleeping and waking are good."

Jayantī : "How ?"

Bhagavān Mahāvīra : "It is better for irreligious people to sleep, because in that state they will not inflict pain on anybody. But it is better for religious people to keep waking, because in the waking state they practise religion and do not injure anybody."

Bhagavān Mahāvīra viewed the truth in the light of anekantavada, and propounded it in terms of Relativism.

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Egalitarianism

Fourteen thousand monks and thirtysix thousand nuns were initiated in the Order founded by Bhagavān Mahāvīra. Lakhs of persons adopted the minor vows and became *śrāvakas* (lay followers). The number of his followers, admirers and supporters was even larger than that and included many well-known personalities of that age. Bhagavān Mahāvīra considered casteism as irrational and inegalitarian. Hence men and women belonging to all castes and communities were initiated by him. Four thousand and four hundred monks initiated by Bhagavān Mahāvīra were Brāhmaṇas.

Many Kṣatriya rulers like Daśārṇabhadra, the ruler of Daśārṇapūra (Vidiśā), Udrāyaṇa, the ruler of Sindhu Sauvīra, Śiva, the ruler of Hastināpur etc. entered the Order of Bhagavān Mahāvīra. Mṛgāvatī, the queen of Śatānika, ruler of Kausambī and several queens of the Emperor Śreṇika of Magadha became nuns and joined the Order.

Dhannā, Śālibhadra, Anāthi etc. belonging to the *Vaiśya* community and *Śudrās* like Arjunamāli were also admitted to the monastic Order of Bhagavān Mahāvīra.

He addressed the monks and nuns : "I have propounded the principle of equality. You have accepted its discipline. The pride of caste, family and

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status creates inegalitarian attitude. One who adopts an insulting attitude towards others gets lost into the world of adversities.

Hence do not take pride in your caste, family and grandeur. You have transcended the limitations of all clan-denominations. You are seekers after emancipation. Only by renouncing the sense of clan-denominations, you can attain that state.'

On being instructed in the egalitarian discipline, monks and nuns hailing from different countries and brought up in different environments fostered brotherhood. The spirit of equality created by Bhagavān Mahāvīra in that age of inequality is still the greatest inspiration for the present age also.

Freedom, relativism, co-existence, co-operation, service, disarmament, renunciation of war, honest dealings, harmony in precept and practice, *ahiṁsā* (non-violence), *aparigraha* (non-acquisition), celibacy, and vegetarianism—these are some of the flashes of the light of the philosophy taught by Bhagavān Mahāvīra.

In the context of spirituality, Bhagavān Mahāvīra said, "It is better for me if I govern myself through religious discipline and, penance rather than be governed by others through force."

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The principles of Bhagavān Mahāvīra have a great relevance today. The concept of freedom was developed in the modern period as a practical ideal, revolution took place against colonialism. In every country, there was a movement to achieve freedom. A major part of the world is free today. Even totalitarianism of today cannot exist without putting on the mask of democracy. Today, even inequality can survive only in the garb of equality. There has never before been such a powerful public opinion in favour of co-existence, human equality, disarmament and anti-militarism. There have been many great men in the history of the world who have preached these very ideals or identical ideals. But investigation will reveal how vitally the experiences and philosophy of Bhagavān Mahāvīra have contributed to the development of these ideas and ideals.

The age of Bhagavān Mahāvīra was chiefly an age of religion. But religion was practised mostly in the form of rites and rituals, and that too merely for attaining the heaven. Such form of religious practice did no service to the society. Bhagavān Mahāvīra preached a religion based on spiritual and moral conduct. A prominent citizen named Ānand came to Bhagavān Mahāvīra with a view to understand the essence of religion.

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Bhagavān Mahāvīra said, "Ānanda, you want to adopt the vow of *ahiṁsā*, but you have a large family, thousands of cows and hundreds of servants. You come into contact with thousands of people. You cannot be cruel to them, if you want to practise *ahiṁsā*. You shall not kill any innocent living being intentionally. You know it very well how cruelly the servants and cattle are treated. You shall not indulge in acts like (1) killing, (2) mutilating men and animals, (3) overloading animals, and (4) depriving men and animals of sustenance."

"Ānanda ! it is true that you propose to take the vow of truth, but you have a huge agricultural estate, a big family and innumerable social contacts. If you behave in delinquent or remiss manner, you will not be able to practise truth. For practising truth, you shall not deny anybody his property deposited with you, not give a false testimony, and not tell lie in your dealings."

There are people who thoughtlessly defame others, accuse others on mere suspicion, disclose confidentially imparted secrets deliberately, misguide others, and indulge in forgery. All such malpractices are opposed to the practice of truth.

"Ānanda, it is true you propose to take the vow of non-stealing. But have you controlled your desires ?"

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Ānanda said, "My Lord, I have done so."

Bhagavān Mahāvīra said, "Ānanda, there are people who do not themselves commit the theft, but receive the stolen property, encourage others to commit theft, illegally transgress the boundaries of hostile countries and use false weights and measures, sell spurious articles after exhibiting genuine ones, and practise adulteration. These malpractices are caused by uncontrolled desires."

"Ānanda, it is true you want to take the vow of celibacy, but you know there are people who have no control over lust, and consider sexual pleasures as the be-all and end-all of life. But I have realized the truth to be contrary to this. According to me, the *summum bonum* of life is the ever-throbbing innate bliss in the depths of consciousness. The sex instinct makes it obscure."

"Ānanda, you want to take the vow of non-possessiveness. But you will not be able to practise it until you impose a strict control on your desires. There are people who needlessly accumulate land, buildings, precious metals like gold and silver, servants, cattle, grains and other household articles. You shall refrain from doing so. You shall have to circumscribe your desires to your bare necessities."

Ānanda took all these vows from Bhagavān Mahāvīra and began to lead a religious life. Bhagavān

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Mahāvīra moulded thousands of people like Ananda. Bhagavān Mahāvīra enhanced the importance of asceticism and also provided a larger scope for the practice of religion in householder's life. He said on one occasion, "The spiritual discipline of the householders may be higher than that of some ascetics (who are lax), but spiritual discipline of the ascetics devoted to sādhanā is undoubtedly the highest."

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VII

THE RELEVANCE OF THE JAINA RELIGION TO MODERN PROBLEMS

Non-violence and Non-possessiveness

One cannot appreciate Bhagavān Mahāvīra's conception of non-violence until and unless he comprehends his conception of non-possessiveness.

Violence and aquisitiveness go hand in hand.

Today, when violence is used against power and wealth, we think violence is on the increase. In the language of Bhagavān Mahāvīra, this violence is against violence. Thinkers of today have begun to endorse Bhagavān Mahāvīra's view that we can put an end to violence only by putting an end to the monopoly of power and wealth. According to Bhagavān Mahāvīra, violence can be eradicated only through a change of heart. Modern political thinkers take a different view of things. They believe that violence can be stopped only through force. But experience so far has shown that force has failed to stop violence and people have now begun to think

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that it cannot succeed unless supported by a favourable public opinion.

The only graceful way to escape reactive violence is to willingly put a limit on possessiveness. The natural conse-quence of this discipline will be an equitable distribution of possessions.

Non-violence and Liberty

Bhagavān Mahāvīra did not ever acquiesce in the usurpation of the freedom of man. Usurpation of freedom amounts to violence. He said "One should discipline oneself. Self-discipline is undoubtedly most difficult. One who has disciplined his own self will certainly be happy here and hereafter.

Non-violence and Equality

Gautama asked Bhagavān Mahāvīra, "Lord ! Are the souls of an elephant and a tiny insect equal?"

Bhagavān Mahāvīra replied, "Yes, Gautama ! The souls of an elephant and a tiny insect are equal. The body of an elephant is huge and that of an insect tiny. The difference in the size cf their bodies does not affect the equality of souls. One who confuses the innate equalities of the souls with their external differences such as bodies, sense-organs, colour and form, caste etc. cannot be a votary of non-violence.

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A non-violent man is he who finds all souls to be equal in spite of external differences.

Where there is inequality, people resort to violence. Bhagavān Mahāvīra said, "O man, you have been passing through the cycle of births from eternity in the course of which you have had relations of mother, father, son or brother etc. with each living being. Then, whom will you treat as a friend or foe, higher or lower, beloved or despicable ? You have not been born only now, hence do not adopt a shortsighted view of things from a timeless perspective. Your soul is eternal and therefore you should try to experience the relationship between all souls. Try to control your mind by practising concentration. By doing so, you will attain equality at all levels of principle, nature and mind. Once you attain equality, you will master *ahiṁsā*. Where there is equality, there is non-violence.

Non-violence and Co-existence

Our thoughts may be divided into two categories : identical, i.e., thoughts which we share with others and different, i.e. thoughts which we do not share with others. We like to live with those who have identical thoughts and ideas but not with those who think differently. We want to eliminate the latter. This is all-pervading conflict; this is war. Bhagavān Mahāvīra said, "How superficial man's

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vision is ! How great is unity below the apparent diversity ! Unity and diversity are the go togethers. There is no real contradiction between the two. Why should then man give importance to differences and try to eliminate opposition and the opponents ?"

"Passions breed violence and violence leads to conflict. Conflicts disappear as soon as passions have been pacified and the consciousness and mind has been purified. Unity as well as differences are the nature of things and both of them will remain. once we develop the attitude of non-violence, differences disappear and co-existence becomes feasible. Non-violence is higher development of consciousness.

Non-Violence and Synthesis

Mental violence is even worse than physical violence. He said, "Look at innumerable characteristics and variations of things in infinite perspectives. Do not perceive them in a single perspective. A narrow-minded man is always dogmatic about his beliefs and decries those of others."

"There is nothing either absolutely eternal or absolutely phenomenal. Whatever exists is eternal as well as ephemeral. A thing which you call eternal at one moment is at the same moment ephemeral also. There is no word in man's language to express this

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simultaneity of opposites. Therefore whenever you give a statement, add the term *syāt* (from a certain point of view) to it. *'Syād asti'* means that from a certain point of view, the thing exists. *'Syād nāsti'* means that from a certain point of view it does not exist. The moments of existence and non-existence are not different. A thing which exists at one moment also does not exist at the same moment. The term *syāt* implies that when we emphasise the existence of a thing, we treat its non-existence as secondary characteristic associated with it and *vice versa*. Existence and non-existenctic cannot be separated from each other. But we cannot express both with a single word and from this point of view a thing is 'inexplicable' (*syād avaktavya*)."

This theory of *syādvāda* puts an end to ideological conflict. It synthesises all the schools of thought. Synthesis exists in the very nature of objects. *Syādvāda* expresses this natural state of synthesis. This way of synthesizing liberates us from violence born of a one-sided view of things, cock-sureness and dogmatism.

Doctrine of Naya

There may be a hundred forms of synthesis. Bhagavān Mahāvīra classified them into seven categories :

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1. *Naigama*	the view which accepts both identity and difference.
2. *Saṁgraha*	the view which posits only identity.
3. *Vyavahāra*	the view which posits only difference.
4. *Ṛjusūtra*	the view which posits only the present moment.
5. *Śabda*	the view which assigns different meanings to a word according to different categories of time, etc.
6. *Samabhirūḍha*	the view which assigns different meanings to the synonymous words according to their etymology.
7. *Evaṁbhūta*	the view which assigns a meaning to a word only according to the present action.

Bhagavān Mahāvīra said, "Both unity and diversity are real. But they are real only in relation to each other, not absolutely. Once this underlying relativity is abandoned, we enter into falsity." This relativism is the *Nayavāda* theory of Bhagavān Mahāvīra. The term *syāt* in the theory of *syād-vāda* relates one aspect of truth to its remaining aspects.

The first step in the journey to *nirvāṇa* is spiritual vision or self-knowledge. Bhagavān

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Mahavira said, "See the truth. Do not depend only on what I say, but develop your own spiritual vision."

Animate and Inanimate

There are two fundamental substances in the universe, animate and inanimate. The universe is neither absolutely of the nature of soul, nor absolutely of the nature of matter. It is both—spiritual and material. Both the kinds of substances (animate and inanimate) of which the universe is composed have their independent existence. Neither is the inanimate born of the animate, nor the *vice versa*. There is an infinite number of animate substances or living beings. Existence of every living being is independent of every other living being. There are five kinds of inanimate substances :

1. *dharmāstikāya* the medium of motion.
2. *adharmāstikāya* the medium of rest.
3. *ākāśāstikāya* the container substance or space.
4. *kāla* the cause of change or time.
5. *pudgala* the substance having touch, taste, smell and colour.

Asrava (Cause of the Influx of *karma*) and Bandh (Bondage of *karma*)

The animate and the inanimate substances possess many a common characteristic. That is why

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they interact. The exertion of the animate (soul) is the agent of this interaction. It (soul) exerts itself to attract the inanimate (matter) and associates it with itself. This attempt to attract the *pudgala* is called *āśrava* (the cause of the influx of *karma*) and its bondage with soul is called *bandha*.

The Cycle of Suffering

The *karmas* bound by good activities express themselves in the form of *puṇya* and those bound by bad activities express themselves in the form of *pāpa*. Man driven by attachment to the rise of *puṇya* and aversion to the rise of *pāpa* exerts itself again to *āśrava*. Thus the cycle from *bandha* to *āśrava* and from another *āśrava* to another *bandha* goes on. This process is called *saṁsāra* (the mundane existence). A soul caught in this process goes on experiencing physical and mental sufferings such as birth, death, old age, disease etc.

The Means of Liberation from the Cycle of Sufferings

One who has achieved the right vision strikes at the root of the cycle of sufferings. This can be achieved in two dimensions. The first is not to get involved into the *bandha* of fresh *karmas*. This is called *saṁvara*. The second is to shed off the past *karmas*. This is called *nirjarā*. This process of

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saṁvara and *nirjarā* does not allow fresh *bandha* to take place and liquidates the old *bandha*. This leads to *mokṣa* (emancipation).

The Purpose of metaphysics

The metaphysics in the context of religion is not an intellectual exercise. Its purpose is not merely to know, but is *mokṣa*—to emancipate the soul. Bhagavān Mahāvīra laid down nine principles for the achievement of this purpose :—(1) *jīva* (2) *ajīva* (3) *puṇya* (4) *pāpa* (5) *āśrava* (6) *saṁvara* (7) *nirjarā* (8) *bandha* and (9) *mokṣa*. Among these the first two, i.e. *jīva* and *ajīva* are metaphysical realities and the remaining are the parts of the process of *bandha* and *mokṣa*.

The Doctrine of Karma

Bhagavān Mahāvīra propounded the doctrine of freedom of soul. The soul is not a part of *paramātmā*—God or Supreme Soul. It does not dissolve into *paramātmā* after it has become emancipated. It maintains its independent existence in the state of bondage as well as liberation. In the 20th century, the intelligentia are now considering Bhagavān Mahāvīra as a Saviour of mankind in the sense that he liberated the mankind from the mirage of dependence on others. He endowed man with the insight to tread the path of self-dependence and spiritual exertion. People

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who believed in God as the creator and controller of man's fate sought his grace. Then, there were those who believed Nature to be the controlling force, and depended on it. Bhagavān Mahāvīra did not deny the existence of *paramātmā*, but he did not accept him to be the creator and controller of man's fate. He said, "Man himself is the maker of his own fate; nobody else is. Even *karma* is not such a controlling force, for man himself is the maker of *karma*. Man is bound to suffer the consequences of his *karma*, but not to the extent that he cannot change its course. One who enjoys an independent existence is also free to enjoy the freedom of action. The ultimate cause lies wholly within him. Forces other than himself do influence his actions, but they cannot completely emasculate him.

Several forces like Time (*kāla*), Nature, universal laws, and *karma* influence man's capacity to act. *Karma* is the most powerful among them, and is closely connected with man. But *karma* itself is created by man's own exertion. The effects of *puṇya* give pleasure and those of *pāpa* produce adversity. Man must bear the consequences of his *karma* in this or the next life. He cannot get rid of the effects of his *karma* until they have been separated from the soul.

Bhagavān Mahāvīra accepted the power of *karma*, but he did not accept it as the supreme power. Had he done so, he would not have been in

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the position to deny the existence of God as the Creator or Controller. It would have simply meant substituting *karma* in place of God without making any difference. Then there would have been a controlling force over soul, whether it be God or *karma*. Bhagavān Mahāvīra accepted the concept of a supreme force in a limited sense only.

The Relative Potentiality of Spiritual Exertion and *Karma*

As *karma* imposes a limit on the free will of man and the *puruṣārtha* (spiritual exertion) of man limits *karma*, *karma* and man's *puruṣārtha* can be explained only from a relativistic point of view. *Puruṣārtha* produces *karma*, i.e., *karma* is a product of *Puruṣārtha*. In case *karma* had an unlimited power, it would render *Puruṣārtha* ineffective. In such a state, the effect of past *karma* would begin to manifest itself and force man to produce another *karma*. The result would be again the rise of *karma* and again the *bandha*. This vicious circle would have deprived man of his freedom. He would have become totally enslaved by *karma*. We should not forget that Bhagavān Mahāvīra was the instructor of the gospel of *Anekānta*. He did not perceive the truth only from a single perspective. He realized the truth that *karma* influences man. But at the same time he also emphasized the other aspect of this very truth

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that the powerful *Puruṣārtha* of man, in its turn, influences *karma*. When we consider the efficacy of *karma* and *Puruṣārtha* from the relativistic standpoint, we have to conclude that *karma* neither allows perfect freedom to man nor does it usurp his freedom completely. Once the *karma* has been completely obliterated, man's power to know, to be detached and to act freely begins to operate fully. If *karma* remains only partially dissolved or subdued, then man's power expresses itself only occasionally and not continuously. This process of manifestation and suppression of man's power goes on. During this process, sometimes *karma* and sometimes man's power has the upper hand.

When we do not truly evaluate the efficacy of *puruṣārtha*, we extol fate or the power of destiny. In fact, *Puruṣārtha* is capable of changing fate—the effects of *karma*.

This doctrine of *karma* sets man free from the mentality of pessimism, passivity and dependence on others. If the present *puruṣārtha* of man were righteous, the effects of past malevolent *karma* can be weakened or transformed into those of benevolent *karma*, and thereby one can tread the lightened path instead of groping in darkness. On the other hand, inactivity born of indolence or mentality of dependence on others deprives man of the

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opportunity of enjoying future benefits and its achievements. It is derogatory on the part of man to be despondent. Problems melt away if man takes recourse to right *puruṣārtha*. He is not totally under the domination of *karma*. *Karma* is only an instrumental cause of man's helplessness. An instrumental cause, no doubt, shows its effect, but after all it is only an instrumental cause, and not an efficient cause. An awakened man can obliterate the dominance of *karma* which only exists as an instrumental cause.

It is man's internal capacity of experiencing pleasure or pain which gives a chance to the instrumental causes to play their role and produce the feelings of pleasure or pain. Individual problems cannot be solved by simply changing external conditions and instrumental causes of pleasure and pain. They can be solved only on the basis of the individual's *karma* and the conditions which effect *karma*.

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VIII
NIRVĀṆA (LIBERATION)

Once Bhagavān Mahāvīra reached Pāvā after visiting various villages. King Hastipāla and his subjects assembled to pay their obeisance to him. Bhagavān Mahāvīra expounded to them the concept of *nirvāṇa*. He was the most effective exponent of the concept of *nirvāṇa*. After his discourse, he called Gautama and said, "Gautama, a Brāhmaṇa named Somaśarmā, lives at a little distance from here. He is a seeker after truth. He will certainly be enlightened if you instruct him. Go there and enlighten him."

In obedience to the instructions of Bhagavān Mahāvīra, Gautama proceeded to enlighten Somaśarmā.

Bhagavān Mahāvīra had been fasting for the last two days. He had not taken even water. He had been delivering long discourses explaining the effects of *karma* in detail. After finishing his final discourse, he entered silence. And he adopted the lotus posture of yoga. His body was completely motionless and

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relaxed. He became emancipated from his gross as well as subtle bodies and became free from the shackles of birth and death. The pure and serene light of his soul attained the perfect state.

He attained the state of *nirvāṇa* in the early dawn of the fifteenth day of the dark half of the lunar month of Kārtika when hardly an hour and a half were left for the sun to rise. Sudharmā and a number of other ascetics were by his side, Eighteen kings of the *Gaṇa* (Republics) of the Mallas and Licchavis were also present there. They lighted lamps in honour of the Light of the soul of Bhagavān Mahāvīra.

The news of the *nirvāṇa* of Bhagavān Mahāvīra spread far and wide. Nandivardhana, the elder brother of Bhagavān Mahāvīra was overwhelmed with grief when he received this news. Although the news of the attainment of the *nirvāṇa* is a matter of great ecstasy, those entangled in the snares of worldly attachment behave in their own way.

Gautama Svāmī had gone to enlighten Somaśarmā, so he was stunned when he heard the news of the *nirvāṇa* of Bhagavān Mahāvīra. He had immense devotion for Bhagavān Mahāvīra. In the presence of Bhagavān Mahāvīra, Gautama's consciousness experienced perfect protection, Bhagavān Mahāvīra found a dependable devotee in

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the latter. Gautama had much attachment to the mortal frame of Bhagavān Mahāvīra and was not prepared to bear separation from him. His attachment to Bhagavān Mahāvīra had not waned even in his physical presence with the result that he could not attain the state of *kaivalya*. His attachment knew no bounds on hearing the news of the *nirvāṇa* of the master. Being overwhelmed he was grieved like an ordinary man. But this state lasted for a few moments only. Gautama was a great sage and was conversant with *śruta* (scriptural knowledge) and was possessed of an insight into the Truth. He had a privilege of being associated with Bhagavān Mahāvīra for a long period of thirty years. He exerted himself by engaging his thirst for knowledge in gaining philosophical knowledge. The *Bhagavatī Sūtra* bears a living testimony to these efforts of Gautama. Such a wise man could not be lost in sorrow. He regained himself. The image of Bhagavān Mahāvīra symbolizing non-attachment flashed before his eyes. His attachment melted away. He himself became free from all attachments, and attained the state of kaivalya. Now he was no more separate from Bhagavān Mahāvīra.

Bhagavān Mahāvīra attained the *nirvāṇa* at the age of seventy-two. He had lived the life of a house-holder for thirty years, that of *sādhanā* for twelve and

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a half years, and that of a *Kevalī* for another thirty years. Highly enlightened ascetics like Gautama and Sudharmā were his disciples, and even though they were eighty years old, they behaved before Bhagavān Mahāvīra with great modesty and dedication. Bhagavān Mahāvīra had a large number of disciples at the time of his *nirvāṇa*.

Epilogue

Bhagavān Mahāvīra had been born a prince and was brought up in the midst of prosperity. His youth synchronized with the development of equality. He devoted himself to the practice of equanimity. He achieved his goal. He lived and worked in the midst of people and showed them the way to peace, equanimity and *anekānta*. His teachings are meant not only for individuals but for the entire society. They do not envisage only the world beyond, but are concerned with this world also. His system of spiritual discipline is not only capable of solving the internal problems of individuals, but social problems also. The principle of *ahiṁsā* he taught is not that of the coward but of the valiant. It is invariably associated with fearlessness and valour. The doctrine of detachment he taught is not a doctrine of passivity. It is an indomitable spiritual force for the pruning of the effects of *karma* and a great means for the development of mental powers.

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Even today his teachings are capable of showing the path to world peace and hence the entire mankind venerates him.

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